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Trollope, *Orley Farm*, and Dickens' Marriage Break-down

Francis O'Gorman

ABSTRACT

Anthony Trollope's *Orley Farm* (1861-2), the plot of which the novelist thought the best he had ever conceived, is peculiarly aware of Charles Dickens, the seemingly unsurpassable celebrity of English letters in the 1850s. This essay firstly examines narrative features of *Orley Farm* that indicate Dickens was on Trollope's mind—and then asks why. My first answer is simply that Trollope was, as he began *Orley Farm*, remarkably and newly confident and was ready to test himself against the towering presence of Dickens. My second answer is that Dickens was on his mind for a different reason. *Orley Farm*, I propose, covertly responds to the public revelations in 1858 of Dickens' marriage break-down and, presently, his affair with a much younger woman. Trollope plots this, implying a coded rebuke to Dickens and sympathy for his abandoned wife. But this element of *Orley Farm* is also, I conclude, a coded admonishment to himself since he was conscious of his affection for the much younger Kate Field, whom he had met the year in which he signed the contract for the new novel. A Dickensian text in form, appearance, mode, and plot, *Orley Farm* is also an unusual essay for Trollope on marital infidelity that was, I think, prompted by his cloudy anxiety about the implications of Kate and, more clearly, by his vexation with what he perceived to be Dickens' shameful disloyalty.

‘She could forgive everything, anything, if he would only return and be contented
to sit opposite her once again.’¹

Anthony Trollope’s *Orley Farm* (1861-2) is, like *The Three Clerks* (1857), an unusually autobiographical novel—though few original readers would have known it. Its plot concerns a forged codicil to Sir Joseph Mason’s will, leaving to Lucius Mason a property—Orley Farm—which should by right have gone to his half-brother, also Joseph Mason. The forger is Lady Mason, Lucius’s mother. She was Sir Joseph’s second and much younger wife. Concerning an expected inheritance that, at the last minute, does not materialise but passes to someone else, *Orley Farm* takes its origin from Trollope’s own family. Trollope’s father, Thomas Anthony Trollope (1774-1835) had grown up expecting to inherit Julians, a country house and estate near Royston in Hertfordshire that belonged to his uncle, Adolphus Meetkerke, who had no children.² As Anthony’s brother, Thomas (‘Tom’) Adolphus Trollope (1810-92), recalled in his autobiography, *What I Remember* (1887-9), the unexpected death of Meetkerke’s wife and his surprising second marriage to a younger woman (Matilda Jane Wilkinson) changed that: ‘he was as fine an old man physically as anybody could wish to see’, Tom said, and before long, he

NOTES

My thanks to members of Oxford University English Faculty’s Victorian Seminar for their comments on a version of this essay: my particular thanks to Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, Sos Eltis, David Russell, Nicholas Shrimpton, and Helen Small.

¹ Anthony Trollope, *Orley Farm*, 2 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1862), i.86.

² Julians was built originally in 1610 and remodelled c.1715. It remains a 90ha estate, 6km east of Baldock, in private hands. Trollope’s father had built a new house on Lord Northwick’s Harrow land (Northwick Park), completed in 1818, which he called Julians (this was because of the strange coincidence of a nearby field being locally known as Julians). Financial problems meant that he had to sub-let this house in 1819 and move back to Ilotts farm, on the southern slope of Harrow Hill (the farm was renamed Julian Hill). This house—also the property of Lord Northwick—is the model for Orley Farm and for Millais’s illustration (see Fig.2). Julian Hill/Ilotts Farm was rebuilt in the Edwardian period and is now called Julian Way. The Harrow Julians still exists—if now called Julian Hill House. John Rushout, Lord Northwick (1769-1859), art collector, had died two years before Trollope began the novel imaginatively about his land: interestingly, Northwick left no heir. These Julians passed into other hands too.

became ‘the father of six children!’³ Thomas Anthony’s expected inheritance of Julians was lost with those new claimants⁴ (and it is worth remembering that the Meetkerke family had lived at Julians for more than two centuries: the inheritance through the direct line was particularly meaningful).

In *Orley Farm*, this history is transformed from a disappointment into a crime. It might be, perhaps, that somewhere in Trollope’s mind he could not throw off the idea that the vanishing of Julians was dishonest, that Meetkerke’s change of will was a deceit not an entirely appropriate bequest to his own heir. Whatever the case, *Orley Farm* muses at length on the pains caused both by inheritance and its failure just as its author would, later in his career, celebrate his own house purchase in central London as proof of his significantly recovered fortunes; as evidence—not least—that he had done better than his father and better than his own dismal career beginnings had portended.⁵

If we cannot know exactly what Trollope thought about the loss of Julians we can, at any rate, be sure that the house served well as an imaginative inheritance because it was reworked into a plot that Trollope later said was ‘probably the best I have ever made’.⁶ *Orley Farm* also, in material terms, eventually made him £3135,⁷ at that point by far the largest sum Trollope had earned from a novel (compare the £1000 he received for *Framley Parsonage* (1860-61)).⁸ The extent to which Trollope drew on his own life in *Orley Farm* is, at least to an extent, plain. But something else personal is happening in this plot of bequests, a novel that David Skilton sees, on the contrary, as primarily impersonal and public, a text ‘promoting legal reform by questioning the

³ Thomas Adolphus Trollope, *What I Remember*, 3 vols (London: Bentley, 1887-9), i.68. For more information about this family matter, see the Introduction to Anthony Trollope, *Orley Farm*, ed. Francis O’Gorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁴ The first child, a son, Adolphus, was born on 22 December 1818.

⁵ See Francis O’Gorman, ‘*The Way We Live Now* and the Meaning of Montagu Square’ forthcoming in *The Edinburgh Companion to Anthony Trollope*, eds. Frederik Van Dam, David Skilton, and Ortwin de Graef (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

⁶ Anthony Trollope *An Autobiography*, ed. Nicholas Shrimpton ([1883] Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 106.

⁷ See *ibid.*, 224. The contract, signed on 3 July 1860 provided £2500 and half-profits on copies beyond the first 10,000.

⁸ *Ibid.*

English system of legal advocacy'.⁹ The personal issue is a dispute with Charles Dickens—both about fiction and, I propose, morals.

Being a successful writer of fiction in 1861 was in one clear way not to be successful. That is because Charles Dickens' popularity and the extent of his sales at this point in the history of the English novel set the bar of what success looked like dauntingly high.¹⁰ And for the few years before *Orley Farm*, Dickens had been extending both his audiences and his level of public admiration by reading tours, the number of which increased from 1858 onwards. There was Thackeray, to be sure and *Vanity Fair* (1848-9); there was George Eliot, who by this stage was, like Thackeray, a friend of Trollope's. But Dickens' place in the literary marketplace as Trollope began *Orley Farm* was peculiarly conspicuous. Looking back in *An Autobiography* (1883), Trollope assessed this public visibility as a unique phenomenon in nineteenth-century English letters and then modulated into a thought about the teaching role of fiction:

There can be no doubt that the most popular novelist of my time—probably the most popular English novelist of any time—has been Charles Dickens. He has now been dead nearly six years, and the sale of his books goes on as it did during his life. The certainty with which his novels are found in every house—the familiarity of his name in all English-speaking countries—the popularity of such characters as Mrs Gamp, Micawber, and Pecksniff, and many others whose names have entered into the English language and become well-known words—the grief of the country at his death, and the honours paid to him at his funeral,—all testify to his popularity. Since the last book he wrote himself, I doubt whether any book has been so popular as his biography by John Forster. There is no withstanding such testimony as this. Such evidence of popular appreciation should go for very much, almost for everything, in criticism on the work of a novelist. The primary

⁹ 'Introduction' to Anthony Trollope, *Orley Farm*, ed. by David Skilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), x.

¹⁰ For an assessment of Trollope's earnings directly in relation to Dickens's, see John Sutherland: 'The Fiction Earning Patterns of Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot and Trollope', *Browning Institute Studies*, 7 (1979), 71-92.

object of a novelist is to please; and this man's novels have been found more pleasant than those of any other writer. It might of course be objected to this, that though the books have pleased they have been injurious, that their tendency has been immoral and their teaching vicious; but it is almost needless to say that no such charge has ever been made against Dickens.¹¹

What is that 'almost' doing in the last sentence? Dickens' popularity is second to none and no-one, Trollope says, needs to defend the teaching of his fiction as moral—well, almost no-one. My article tries—to phrase its intentions in thoroughly unambitious terms—to explain a covert possibility behind that one word. But this praise is followed in *An Autobiography* by more explicit criticism of Dickens as a novelist: of Dickens' characters, Trollope says: 'to my judgment they are not human beings, nor are any of the characters human which Dickens has portrayed'.¹² And of his style, the author of *Orley Farm* adds, 'it is impossible to speak in praise. It is jerky, ungrammatical, and created by himself in defiance of rules—almost as completely as that created by Carlyle'.¹³ Popular but incredible in his characterisation; widely read but no handbook to style: Dickens, *An Autobiography* permits the reader to infer, is admired by readers generously overlooking faults.

In 1861, as Trollope was writing *Orley Farm*,¹⁴ he took his reservations about Dickens into Dickens' own territory—or at least invited his reader to assess the two men side-by-side. Made more confident by his new (from 1859) senior position in the Post Office that had brought him back from Ireland (as Surveyor of the Eastern District of England) and by the success of *Framley Parsonage* issued by Thackeray and George Smith in the new *Cornhill Magazine*, Trollope ventured a novel that jousting with the then largest personality in English fiction. For a start, like *Framley*,

¹¹ Trollope, *An Autobiography*, 154-5.

¹² *Ibid.*, 155.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ The novel was written between 4 July 1860 and 22 June 1861.

Orley Farm followed Dickens' own habit of shilling serialisation (and his publisher, Chapman and Hall, had just become Dickens's again with *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859)). Second, it was a big legal novel. Third, it was about London. Fourth it offered Christmas fiction. Fifth it reprised a memorable love (or rather non-love) scene from a novel Trollope mistrusted, *Little Dorrit* (1855-7). And sixth, *Orley Farm*'s habit of characterisation dallied with Dickensian comedy alongside Trollope's more expected realist figures.

Trollope said nothing about *Bleak House* (1852-3) as a whole in *An Autobiography*. But *Orley Farm* naturally invites comparison with Dickens' novel of Chancery, less than a decade earlier. Like Dickens, writing a text in which the *Athenæum* rather strangely declared the author had 'rarely, if ever, been happier',¹⁵ Trollope produces a long narrative of waiting for judgment. Dickens' interest is in a will, like Trollope's, and his—Dickens'—Jarndyce and Jarndyce plot attracts attention to the workings of one particular branch of the judiciary: the courts of Chancery and their need for reform. Trollope, likewise, has his specific legal reform ambitions however imperfectly he understood what he was talking about.¹⁶ Taken, in Skilton's terms, as a public novel on legal matters, *Orley Farm* mistrusts the advocacy role of barristers—and to a certain extent the role of the solicitor general as an over-seer—just as it is suspicious of the techniques barristers use in court, as Trollope perceives it, to obfuscate facts and distort truths. Trollope, of course, was to be severely criticised for failing to understand the nature of the law and the workings of advocacy. The Scottish journalist E.S. Dallas (1828-79) memorably rebuked him in *The Times* on 26 December 1862, for instance, declaring that in *Orley Farm* Trollope had failed to grasp the difference between a fact and evidence for a fact, foolishly assumed 'that

¹⁵ 'Bleak House', *The Athenæum*, 1351 (17 September 1853), 1087-88 (1087).

¹⁶ Keiran Dolin in chapter 5 of *Fiction and the Law: Legal Discourse in Victorian and Modernist Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) takes issue with the notion that accuracy in representing the law in a novel is a problem in *Orley Farm*, preferring to see the emergence of professional specialism in the second half of the nineteenth century leading to a sharp separation between legal and fictional language. I differently argue in my Introduction to *Orley Farm* that a novel hoping to reform the law can reasonably be expected to be accurate about representing what it wants to reform. For another view—that the critics of *Orley Farm* actually missed out some of the more serious problems of Trollope's representation of the law—see Albert D. Pionke, 'Navigating "Those Terrible Meshes of the Law": Legal Realism in Anthony Trollope's *Orley Farm* and *The Eustace Diamonds*', *ELH*, 77 (2010), 129-57.

lawyers are all liars', and somehow proposed that barristers 'should be judges rather than advocates, should say no more than they think, [and] should refuse to accept a brief where they believe that their proposed client is guilty'.¹⁷ Trollope, not realising that barristers test evidence and represent their clients' interests, acting on what their client instructs, is, certainly, heavy-handed in his depiction of the workings of the law however admirable he is in a commitment to the notion that veracity should be the objective of a trial. But Trollope's ambition was broadly the same as Dickens': fiction can represent legal imperfections and corruptions in the hope of redress.

Considering these reformist intentions, it is worth adding, perhaps, that *Orley Farm* attends to a real event in the history of legal development that relates directly to Dickens, albeit only well-informed readers would have recognized this. Trollope's draws extensively on the first meeting of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, which included panels on legal reform, at Birmingham on 12 October 1857 (chapters 7 and 8 of *Orley Farm* provide many details, for example, and Mr Furnival has to return from Birmingham to wait on Lady Mason). The president of that meeting in reality was Henry Peter Brougham, first Baron Brougham and Vaux (1778-1868), who served as lord chancellor. Lord Brougham's brother, William Brougham (1795-1896), was a distinguished legal reformer who had assisted in the abolition of the Masters in Chancery in 1852 (15 & 16 Vict. c. 80), the court that was the target of Dickens' *Bleak House*. Although Trollope does not represent the Birmingham meeting as particularly productive, he obliquely registers the existence of a man who had at least partly solved, before Dickens had expressed anxiety about them, problems with a legal institution.

Trollope ventures more obviously into another patch of Dickens' legal territory. In the final chapters of *Orley Farm* we reach, at last, the Alston Assizes and listen, as it were, to the trial. This is not so much *Bleak House*'s terrain as the recent *A Tale of Two Cities*, which includes the Old

¹⁷ 'Orley Farm', *The Times* (26 December 1862), 5.

Bailey trial of Charles Darnay for espionage at the beginning of the novel and the French revolutionary court that tries him for crimes against the people at the end. Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities*, like Trollope in *Orley Farm*, is narratively absorbed by the sparring of barristers and witnesses, by the conspicuous drama of cross-examination. Here, as Caroline Levine might say, is one of the serious pleasures of suspense.¹⁸ This is a portion of Dickens' depiction of Darnay being questioned at the Old Bailey:

Had he ever been a spy himself? No, he scorned the base insinuation. What did he live upon? His property. Where was his property? He didn't precisely remember where it was. What was it? No business of anybody's. Had he inherited it? Yes, he had. From whom? Distant relation. Very distant? Rather. Ever been in prison? Certainly not. Never in a debtors' prison? Didn't see what that had to do with it. Never in a debtors' prison?—Come, once again. Never? Yes. How many times? Two or three times. Not five or six? Perhaps. Of what profession? Gentleman. Ever been kicked? Might have been. Frequently? No. Ever kicked downstairs? Decidedly not; once received a kick on the top of a staircase, and fell downstairs of his own accord. Kicked on that occasion for cheating at dice? Something to that effect was said by the intoxicated liar who committed the assault, but it was not true. Swear it was not true? Positively. Ever live by cheating at play? Never. Ever live by play? Not more than other gentlemen do. Ever borrow money of the prisoner? Yes. Ever pay him? No. Was not this intimacy with the prisoner, in reality a very slight one, forced upon the prisoner in coaches, inns, and packets? No. Sure he saw the prisoner with these lists? Certain. Knew no more about the lists? No. Had not procured them himself, for instance? No. Expect to get anything by this evidence? No. Not in regular government pay and employment, to lay traps? Oh dear no. Or to do anything? Oh

¹⁸ See Caroline Levine, *The Serious Pleasures of Suspense: Victorian Realism and Narrative Doubt* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003).

dear no. Swear that? Over and over again. No motives but motives of sheer patriotism?

None whatever.¹⁹

It is taut, tense, and peculiarly aural prose, crafted concisely and effectively as if Dickens is remembering his skills as a parliamentary reporter. And this scene is matched by the brisk and shocking court episode at the end of the novel that involves a unanimous vote for Darnay's death as 'At heart and by descent an Aristocrat, an enemy of the Republic, a notorious oppressor of the People.'²⁰ Fiction—even if it misrepresents the law—still imagines court scenes of exceptional drama and human interest.

Recollecting his own appearance in Ireland as a witness for the prosecution and his own cross-examination by the celebrated barrister (Sir) Isaac Butt (1813-79),²¹ Trollope too plays out the drama of court in the late chapters of *Orley Farm*, most notably Furnival's demolition of John Kenneby and Chaffanbrass's undermining of Bridget Bolster (chapter 71). There are other barristers and other trials in Trollope's fiction, for sure. Isaac Butt asked him, for one, about the barristers in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* (1843).²² But with *Orley Farm*, the whole novel is organised towards a court-room scene, comprising what George Orwell called in 1944 'one of the most brilliant descriptions of a law suit in English fiction'.²³ So organised, Trollope's text reminds readers that it was not Dickens only who could exploit this kind of legal spectacle—just as Trollope was also assuming a public role as a critic of the (supposed) operation of the courts.

¹⁹ Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1859), 128.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 367.

²¹ Justin McCarthy (1830-1912)—Irish nationalist MP and author of *History in Our Own Times* (1878)—records something of this event where Trollope's good humour, composure, and dazzling self-confidence were manifest in such a way that Butt failed to break him in McCarthy's *Reminiscences*, 2 vols (New York: Harper, 1899), i.371-3. The exchange as a whole is reproduced from the trial report in the *Kerry Evening Post*, 28 January 1849, in R.C. Terry, ed., *Anthony Trollope: Interviews and Recollections* (London: Macmillan, 1987), 40-44 and as an appendix to my edition.

²² See *Interviews and Recollections*, 43-4.

²³ *I Have Tried to Tell the Truth*, in *The Complete Works of George Orwell*, ed. Peter Davison, 20 vols (London: Secker & Warburg, 1986-8), xvi.449-51 (449). Orwell was reviewing for the *Manchester Evening News*, 2 November 1944, some new Penguin volumes including Trollope's *The Warden* (1855).

Trollope confronts, or rather inhabits, another portion of Dickens' favoured material too—a narrative topic, one might say, central to Dickens' brand as an English novelist. The multiple Christmas scenes of *Orley Farm*—‘Christmas in Harley Street’, ‘Christmas at Noningsby’, ‘Christmas at Groby Park’, and ‘Christmas in Great St Helens’—take Trollope's prose into an area that Dickens had more or less made his own. The last Christmas chapter, ‘Christmas in Great St Helens’, is peculiarly watchful of Dickens and of ‘Stave 3’ of *A Christmas Carol* (1843) in particular, which narrates Bob Cratchit's Christmas dinner of a goose. ‘At last’, Dickens tells his readers in that much-loved story:

the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration.²⁴

Trollope sets out his own version nearly twenty years later. ‘For the next three or four minutes’, *Orley Farm* says:

Moulder did not speak a word. The turkey was on his mind, with the stuffing, the gravy, the liver, the breast, the wings, and the legs. He stood up to carve it, and while he was at the work he looked at it as though his two eyes were hardly sufficient. He did not help first

²⁴ Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol in Prose: Being A Ghost Story of Christmas* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843), 92-3.

one person and then another, so ending by himself; but he cut up artistically as much as might probably be consumed, and located the fragments in small heaps or shares in the hot gravy; and then, having made a partition of the spoils, he served it out with unerring impartiality. To have robbed any one of his or her fair slice of the breast would, in his mind, have been gross dishonesty. In his heart he did not love Kantwise, but he dealt by him with the utmost justice in the great affair of the turkey's breast. When he had done all this, and his own plate was laden, he gave a long sigh. 'I shall never cut up such another bird as that, the longest day that I have to live,' he said; and then he took out his large red silk handkerchief and wiped the perspiration from his brow.²⁵

This is *hommage*, perhaps, or affectionate parody. Two cooked birds of quality *sans pareil*, working-class good cheer; Christmas generosity to those not entirely liked. Yet this relationship between two texts is also another pointer. This is such an obvious piece of Dickensianism, it seems to me, that we can hardly miss it: 'Dickens matters to this novel', Trollope is apparently saying: 'do not fail to notice that Dickens is here'.

Orley Farm is a London novel too, that runs paths, so to speak, through Dickens' own literal territory. Through the law courts, yes: but also elsewhere. Mr Chaffanbrass—partly based on Isaac Butt—lives in Ely Place, still the last privately owned street in London, to the east of Chancery Lane: *Little Dorrit*'s Bleeding Heart Yard is at the top. Golden Square, slightly to the east of Regent Street, figures in Trollope's chapter 49. It is where Ralph Nickleby in Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-9) lives ('Although a few members of the graver professions live about Golden Square, it is not exactly in anybody's way to or from anywhere [...]'²⁶). Mrs Furnival, who grows up in the area of Great Ormond Street, is close to Doughty Street where, at number 48, Dickens himself lived from 1837 to 1839 (now the Charles Dickens Museum: Dickens, when

²⁵ *Orley Farm*, i.189.

²⁶ Charles Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1839), 5.

he met Catherine, had, incidentally, been living with his brother Fred in Furnival's Inn, the now defunct Inn of Court that gives Trollope his principal barrister's name). And when not set in London the novel seems to me to remind readers of Dickens even more.

That is not because the Leeds scenes of *Orley Farm* (in the invented pub, The Bull) describe a city Dickens liked: he did not care for Leeds. But the episodes set in the Commercial Room of The Bull, with Moulder, Kantwise, and Dockwrath, have a Dickensian energy and comedy, and a reliance on caricature, which is not Trollope's habitual mode (however much throughout his career he liked to name minor figures in ways that made them sound as if they *should* be caricatures). Trollope thought Dickens' characters not human—but Moulder and Kantwise are deft comedy two-dimensionals with catchphrases ('Gammon!') and fixed habits of mind like Dickens' humorous figures (selling absurd patent steel furniture, in Kantwise's case, on which he comically stands to illustrate its strength: see Fig. 1), as well as—in Moulder's case—an inflated sense of self-importance that makes him a little like Bumble in *Oliver Twist* (1837-9).

These comic scenes can feel out-of-place in Trollope's fiction. George Eliot certainly did not like them and wondered at the fact that *The Spectator* did.²⁷ In particular, the scene in which Kantwise's damaged goods—'that set of metallic "Louey Catorse furniture," containing three tables, eight chairs, &c., &c'²⁸—are made a present to the curate's wife by the Dickensian spend-thrift Mrs Mason reads, on first acquaintance, as at odds with the realism of much of the rest of the novel. Mrs Mason is, certainly, a caricature and her inventive meanness is the kind of thing with which Dickens might have dealt with liveliness and colour. The lunch with Mr Dockwrath in chapter 8 is, in turn, a bravura piece of comedy in something like Dickens' manner, with two miserly chicken drumsticks and an 'indescribable bone' from some other part of the bird. And,

²⁷ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell on 14 January 1862: 'I have read most of the numbers of *Orley Farm*, and admire it very much, with the exception of such parts as I have read about Moulder and Co., which by the way, I saw in glancing at a late *Spectator*, the sapient critic there selects for peculiar commendation', *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954-78), iv.8. It is not clear to which review Eliot refers as the laudatory *Spectator* review did not appear till October 1862.

²⁸ *Orley Farm*, i.181.

Trollope continues, 'on the dish before the lady, there were three other morsels, black-looking and very suspicious to the eye, which in the course of conversation were proclaimed to be ham,—broiled ham.'²⁹ Read as Trollope this scene is uncharacteristic; read as Trollope-doing-Dickens, it becomes an amusing essay in a kind of witty borrowing, an effort at affable ventriloquization.

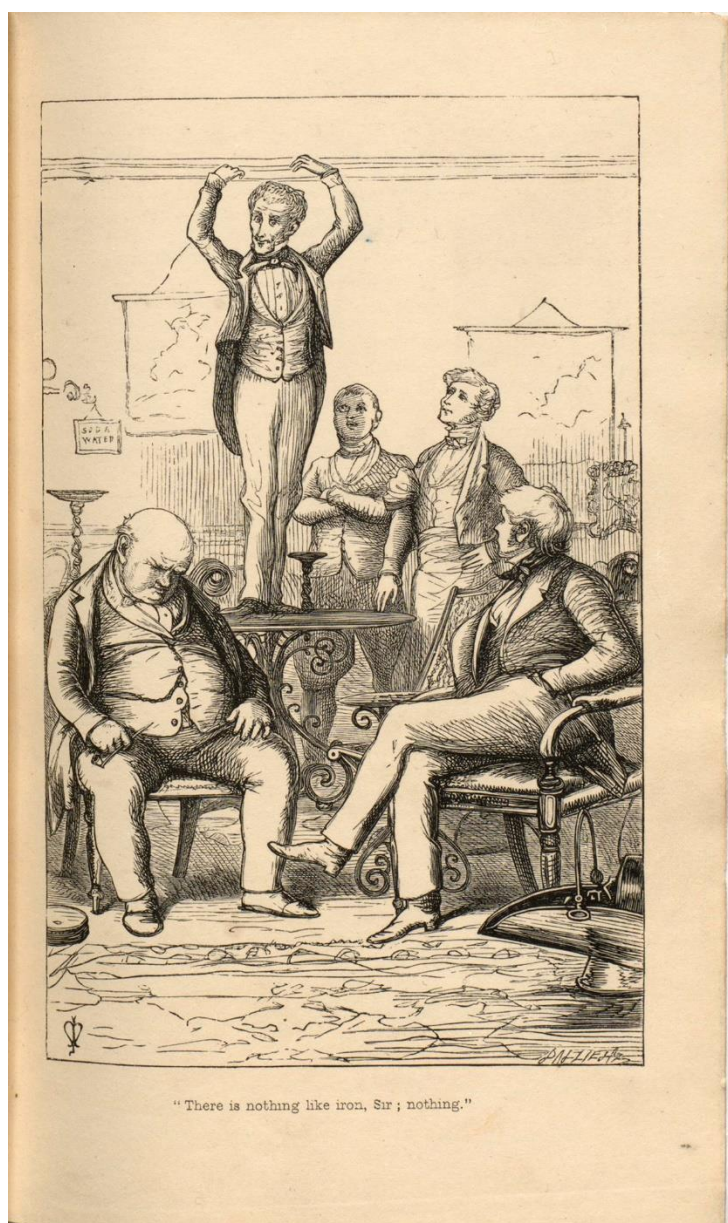


Fig.1.

²⁹ Ibid., i.62.

This was serialised fiction, in Dickens' manner, sounding in places a little like Dickens. And the novel—as Fig.1 indicates—also looked a little like Dickens too. That was because, as with *Framley Parsonage* in *The Cornhill*, *Orley Farm* was illustrated—and by no-one less than John Everett Millais (1829-96). In this matter, Trollope would in due course represent himself as having outdone Dickens, as well as everyone else. Trollope had had some trouble with one of Millais's illustrations for *Framley*—the June 1860 instalment which included an image of Lucy Robarts in despair. More skirt than anything else, the picture was 'simply ludicrous', the irritated author told the publisher.³⁰ But Millais was retained for *Orley Farm* and Trollope was delighted with what he had done. Perhaps working from a photograph of Trollope's original home,³¹ Millais' striking representation of Orley Farm itself remains an eye-catching pastoral image with some slightly ominous gathering birds (Fig.2).

³⁰ *The Letters of Anthony Trollope* ed. by N. John Hall with the assistance of Nina Burgis, 2 vols (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), i.104 (letter of 23 May 1860 to George Smith). Hereafter *Letters*.

³¹ See note 2.

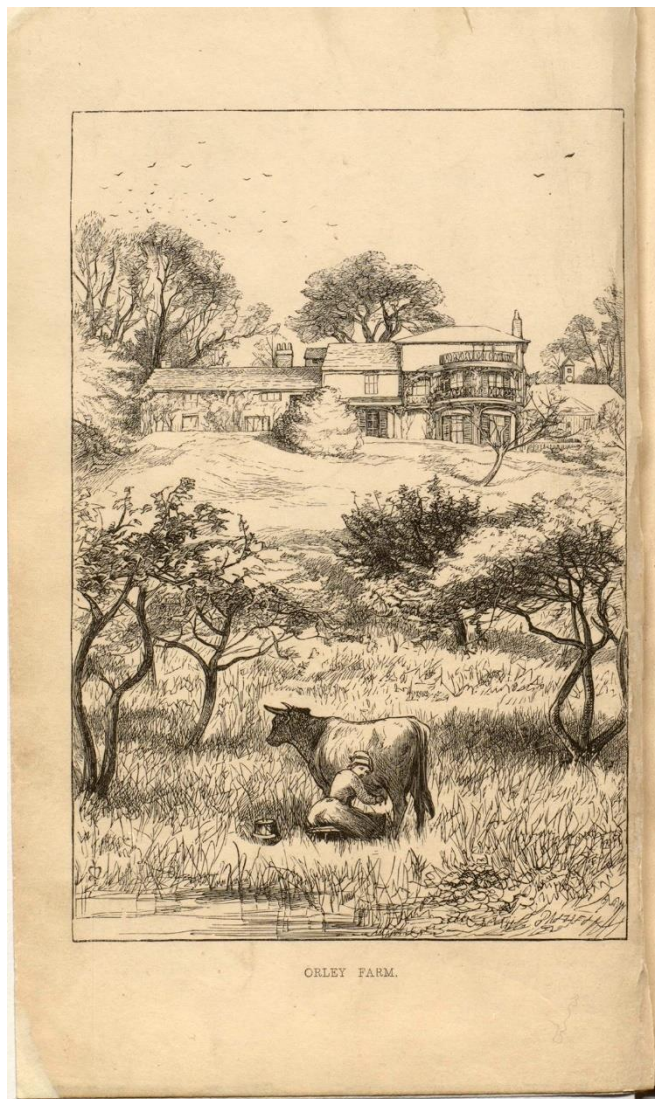


Fig.2.

In *An Autobiography*, summing up a number of the merits of the novel as he saw it, Trollope concluded with a silent observation about Dickens (and others): ‘I do not know’, he remarked, ‘that there is a dull page in the book. I am fond of *Orley Farm*;—and am especially fond of its illustrations by Millais, which are the best I have seen in any novel in any language.’³² That is quite a statement. If Dickens had arisen to public acclaim with an illustrated sequence of stories—*Pickwick Papers* (1836-7)—his success with images thereafter had not, *An Autobiography*

³² Trollope, *An Autobiography*, 106. Trollope’s relationship with Millais has most recently been examined by Ileana Marin in ‘Millais’s Illustrations: Fuel for Trollope’s Writing’, *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, 21 (2012), 5-21.

confidently asserts, overtaken the greater achievement of Millais's work for Trollope in his periodically Dickens-conscious *Orley Farm*.

So why was Trollope taking this trouble to think about Dickens and, perhaps, to be bothered by Dickens? Why was he shadow-boxing with, periodically half-imitating, another novelist at the peak of his career whose level of popularity, as Trollope well knew, was pretty much unsurpassable? And Trollope, it is worth adding, deepened yet further the Dickensian nature of his new novel even at the level of single episodes: *Orley Farm*, for instance, recast an unforgettably awkward scene from *Little Dorrit*. Arthur Clenham, in chapter 13 of Dickens' novel, revisits his former beloved, Flora, who is now married to Mr Finching. But the contrast between the young woman Clenham had once loved and the older one now married to someone else is painful and disillusioning: 'Flora, always tall, had grown to be very broad too, and short of breath;' Dickens writes of Clenham's observations: 'but that was not much. Flora, whom he had left a lily, had become a peony; but that was not much. Flora, who had seemed enchanting in all she said and thought, was diffuse and silly. That was much. Flora, who had been spoiled and artless long ago, was determined to be spoiled and artless now. That was a fatal blow.'³³ Recalling Dickens' own re-visitation of his former flame, Maria Beadnell, in 1855, the *Little Dorrit* scene is picked up and re-worked in chapter 42 of *Orley Farm* where, in a striking recollection of *Little Dorrit*, Trollope has the unlucky clerk John Kenneby travel to meet his own former lover, Miriam. And Kenneby is similarly disappointed: 'He knew her', Trollope's narrator observes, 'instantly in spite of all the change. He knew her, but the whole course of his feelings were altered at the moment, and his blood was made to run the other way. [...]'.³⁴ It is a thought-provoking scene of reacquaintance—and one made even more noticeable by a full-page illustration of the re-union³⁵—which invites the reader to think also, perhaps, of a literary reacquaintance: of one novel calling up another, of one novelist imagining another in a kind of

³³ Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1857), 108.

³⁴ *Orley Farm*, ii.11.

³⁵ Facing page ii.11.

competition. Disappointments in love: Trollope could not have known about Maria Beadnell.

The private narrative behind the Flora and Arthur scene in *Little Dorrit* must have passed him, as every other reader, by. But it might be that the topic of Dickens and a lover's disappointment is a clue.

The first answer, though, to the question about Dickens' prominence in *Orley Farm* must simply concern, as I have said, the general matter of Trollope's growing confidence. In *An Autobiography*, Trollope noted that *Orley Farm* had been written at a time when his life-long ambitions were being satisfied. 'I now felt', he said, about the early 1860s,

that I had gained my object. In 1862 I had achieved that which I contemplated when I went to London in 1834, and towards which I made my first attempt when I began the *Macdermots* in 1843. I had created for myself a position among literary men, and had secured to myself an income on which I might live in ease and comfort,—which ease and comfort have been made to include many luxuries. From this time for a period of twelve years my income averaged £4500 a year. Of this I spent about two-thirds, and put by one. I ought perhaps to have done better,—to have spent one-third, and put by two; but I have ever been too well inclined to spend freely that which has come easily.³⁶

From his unpromising and in many ways wretched beginning, with his father's hapless poverty, the loss of an estate, and with a dismal beginning to a Post Office career, Trollope was now certain of himself enough to look around at those who had done better than him, and risk some competitive jousting, some more or less direct invitations for readers to make comparisons. Dickens, at this point, was the obvious person to think about. A man's success, Trollope implies, can legitimately be measured by those with whom he believes he can contest.

³⁶ *An Autobiography*, 106.

But *Orley Farm* involves something more than this. The novel includes invitations to keep Dickens in mind while reading. That is, I propose, because a portion of the novel's plot is not imitative of Dickens but implicitly critical. *Orley Farm* alludes to Great Britain's most popular novelist more or less explicitly in some ways because it hopes that a few readers might infer what it does not make explicit in another: that is, the novel hopes that those readers might identify a coded rebuke to the older writer made on the basis of rumour and speculation about him, as well as a number of hard facts (and possibly more hard facts that Trollope knew that we cannot now recover). There is a public readership for *Orley Farm* and a coterie one: those who could make the link between its Dickensian manner and what it hinted about, to say the least, Dickens' manners. If Trollope is partly implying that he is as good as Dickens the novelist in one way in *Orley Farm*, he is also implying—in an importantly compromised way, as I go on to describe—that he is *better* in another. And the topic, of all things, concerns a subject Trollope almost never touched in fiction: marital infidelity.³⁷ Disappointment in love, as I said, is the clue.

Exactly when Dickens' marriage to Catherine Hogarth (1815-79) began seriously to go wrong is hard to establish, assuming that there is such an 'exact' moment in a failing relationship anyway. At the beginning of the 1850s, certainly, there were private expressions of regret, then the gradual creation of separate lives. But the appearance in Dickens' life of the eighteen-year old actress Ellen Lawless Ternan (1839-1914), to whom the novelist was first introduced on the set of *The Frozen Deep* in Manchester in July 1857, seems—so far as we know—to have propelled the end of the relationship and to have placed Dickens in an exceptionally compromised situation. Despite the penetrating work of, among others, John Bowen, Ada Nisbet, Michael Slater, and Claire Tomalin, the facts of Dickens' relationship with Nelly (as she was usually called) are neither very numerous nor always entirely secure. Michael Slater's *The Great Charles Dickens*

³⁷ Note that two short stories written close to the time of *Orley Farm* are also, suggestively, about infidelity. See Anthony Trollope, 'The Banks of the Jordan' (1861), *The London Review*, 2 (5 January 1861), 15-18 and 'Mrs General Talboys', *The London Review*, 2 (2 February 1861), 129-33. Trollope, as noted, began writing *Orley Farm* on 4 July 1860.

Scandal (2012) is the most recent, and judicious, assessment of that which is known and that which is not. But what did Anthony Trollope grasp of this scandal as he sat down to write his semi-Dickensian *Orley Farm*?

Trollope can hardly have forgotten that Dickens had had publicly to defend himself in 1858 against rumours of an involvement with someone else after the failure of his marriage to Catherine. This was national news—which shortly became international news. The public defence was two years before Trollope's novel was contracted. Dickens—in what still seems an extraordinary act of both exposure and (probable) deceit—had published a note, both defending and defensive, in *The Times* (of all places) on 7 June 1858 and republished exactly the same note a few days later in his own *Household Words* (its title peculiarly ironic in the context). 'Some domestic trouble of mine, of long-standing,' Dickens had said,

on which I will make no further remark than that it claims to be respected, as being of a sacredly private nature, has lately been brought to an arrangement, which involves no anger or ill-will of any kind, and the whole origin, progress, and surrounding circumstances of which have been, throughout, within the knowledge of my children. It is amicably composed, and its details have now but to be forgotten by those concerned in it.³⁸

The facts behind this are not here the issue. The point is rather that Trollope could hardly have missed this public notification from the nation's most popular novelist, a notification that went on to describe what sounds—in a half-veiled form—like a counter to allegations of marital infidelity: 'this trouble', Dickens observed, 'has been made the occasion of misrepresentations, most grossly false, most monstrous, and most cruel—involving, not only me, but innocent

³⁸ 'Personal', *Household Words*, xvii (12 June 1858), p.429 (429).

persons dear to my heart [...]’.³⁹ Who are these persons? Their mention feeds rather than supplants rumours, it might be thought. The obvious assumption now is that they are the Ternan family. Could Trollope have been ignorant of this public announcement? And it is worth remembering that Trollope’s brother, Tom, had been introduced to Nelly’s sister, Frances (1835-1913), in 1858 in Florence and would marry her in 1866 after the death of his first wife Theodosia Garrow. We know from the third volume of Tom’s memoirs that ‘a strong friendship had sprung up between her [Frances] and my first wife’⁴⁰ shortly after that meeting and also that, on Frances’ return to England, ‘she [Frances] had through us made the acquaintance of my brother and his family, who all of them soon learned to value and esteem her as warmly as we did.’⁴¹ In a literal sense, Anthony was within the Ternan circle.

We can also be sure that, as he began *Orley Farm*, Trollope knew about what became known as the ‘Garrick Club Affair’, directly involving Dickens, for the simple reason that Trollope was directly involved too. Certainly, Trollope knew that Edmund Yates (1831-94)—journalist, writer, post office worker, editor—had mischievously published in *Town Talk*⁴² an account of Thackeray at the Garrick Club and that a row had ensued: Yates was in due course expelled from the Garrick. Trollope, alas, had unintentionally extended this unfortunate disagreement by repeating, in 1860, another story about Thackeray and the publisher George Smith to Yates who, again, published it, this time in the *New York Times* on 26 May: it was thereafter reproduced as ‘Newspaper Gossip’ in *The Saturday Review* on 23 June. I mean ‘unintentionally’ in the sense that Trollope was unaware, as he said in a passage omitted from *An Autobiography* and restored in Nicholas Shrimpton’s edition, that Yates was a ‘literary gutter-scraper’⁴³ and that he should not have passed on anecdotes to him. Prior to this additional problem, however, was the

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Thomas Adolphus Trollope, *The Further Reminiscences of Mr T.A. Trollope*, a continuation of *What I Remember* (London: Bentley, 1889), 29.

⁴¹ Ibid., 29-30.

⁴² This article is reproduced in *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, ed. Gordon N. Ray, 4 vols (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1945-6), iv. facing page 90.

⁴³ *An Autobiography*, 275.

conspicuous fact that, after the *Town Talk* item in 1858, Dickens himself had waded in to defend, of all people, Yates—to all appearances without good reason—and to side with him against Thackeray. Dickens' anger with Thackeray broke their friendship. Trollope knew this story—and he might have known the *whole* story, too, and exactly why Dickens had become so aggressively keen on supporting the 'gutter-scraper' Yates.

Gordon N. Ray reconstructed the truth of the matter, drawing on one of Thackeray's candid letters, of which he was the editor. And this is what happened:

Thackeray first heard [of Dickens' marriage problems and of an alleged affair] on 14 May [1858]. While he was visiting the Epsom meeting to witness the race for the Derby Stakes, an acquaintance passed along to him certain rumors concerning Dickens' involvement with Ellen Ternan. A few days later at the Garrick Club, he was told of the separation impeding between Dickens and his wife. His sympathies were immediately engaged on Mrs Dickens' side. 'To think of the poor matron after 22 years of marriage going away out of her house!' he exclaimed to his mother. 'O dear me [it's] a fatal story of our trade.' But when his interlocutor suggested that Dickens was leaving his wife 'on account of an intrigue with his sister in law,' Georgina Hogarth, Thackeray impulsively drew on the rumors that had come his way at Epsom to refute the charge. 'No says I no such thing—[it's] with an actress.' This conversation was reported to Dickens in a way that made Thackeray figure, not as a friend supporting him (however injudiciously) against slander, but as an enemy spreading malicious gossip.⁴⁴

What lay under the surface of Dickens' hostility to Thackeray and his otherwise hard-to-understand support of Yates was the same that had prompted the notice in *The Times* and

⁴⁴ Gordon N. Ray, 'Dickens versus Thackeray: The Garrick Club Affair', *PMLA*, 69 (1954), pp.815-32 (819). The letter on which Ray draws is that to Mrs Carmichael Smyth, May 1858 [no day], reproduced in *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, iv.85-7.

Household Words: the irritation, and perhaps the anxiety, of a man who denies, and wants to erase, a rumour that is (probably) true.

Trollope knew that Thackeray, Yates, and Dickens had badly fallen out in 1858 and he knew he had not helped matters in 1860. It is not impossible that he knew what was at the root of it all. There was yet more public evidence, however, about Dickens' marital situation in 1858 that did not depend on what happened behind the closed doors of the Garrick (of which Trollope himself became a member on 5 April 1862, sponsored by Thackeray⁴⁵). What Dickens called the 'Violated Letter'—originally given to Arthur Smith, the man who arranged Dickens' public readings, to reveal to whomsoever he thought necessary—was published in *The New York Tribune* on 16 August 1858. It is unclear if such publication had been intended by Dickens all along, despite his protests. This letter, more revealingly even than *The Times* and *Household Words* notice, spoke of 'a young woman for whom I have a great attachment and regard'.⁴⁶ Dickens' secret was, it appeared, on the edge of public revelation. Ellen Ternan was being gossiped about in the late spring of 1858 on the stands at Epsom, her existence hinted at in *The Times* and more exactly in *The New York Tribune*, while in the Garrick Club two leading novelists had fallen out with each other over her role in one of their lives. It hardly seems impossible that Nelly's name, or at least her existence, had reached Trollope at the very moment he was thinking of squaring himself against the celebrity of the older man.

And so comes *Orley Farm*. This novel that variously keeps Dickens in view through form and characterisation, topics and mode, tells also the story of two (apparent) sexual betrayals: one, Felix Graham's, the result of social upgrading; two, Mr Furnival's, an affair only of the mind but disastrously handled, and painfully humiliating to Mrs Furnival. In this second (seeming) betrayal, the problem is Mr Furnival's fondness for the attractions of a younger woman, Lady Mason, the forger (and it is worth bearing in mind, in broader context, that the entire plot of

⁴⁵ Trollope misdates his membership of the Garrick to 1861 in *An Autobiography*, 100.

⁴⁶ Quoted in *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, iv.86n.

Trollope's novel depends on the problems resulting from a man having formed a relationship with a younger woman). Trollope's barrister, who defends Lady Mason in court, leaves Birmingham, as I have said, to meet her in his chambers ('Had she given way to dowdiness', Trollope tells us as we begin to understand that Furnival is charmed by Lady Mason, 'or suffered herself to be, as it were, washed out, Mr Furnival, we may say, would not have been there to meet her;—of which fact Lady Mason was perhaps aware'⁴⁷). For the majority of the interview, Furnival holds her hand—and the longer this continues in the narrative the more charged the scene becomes. The moral problem, in Trollope's plot, is not centrally Furnival's feelings for Lady Mason. It is how the friendship is perceived by Mrs Furnival, a lady without physical charms, 'solid, and heavy, and red'.⁴⁸

Unusually for Trollope, *Orley Farm*'s subplot is the story of a wife leaving her husband (and taking rented rooms some distance away from him). Mrs Furnival can, simply phrased, put up with the idea of his affair with a younger woman no more (the title of chapter 49 is bluntly 'Mrs Furnival can't put up with it'). Thackeray, as Ray reminds us, wrote of his sympathy for Mrs Dickens: 'To think of the poor matron after 22 years of marriage going away from out of her house!⁴⁹ *Orley Farm* is similar in its allegiance to the (here, seemingly) betrayed wife. The subplot in Trollope's novel results in distressing scenes as we perceive Mrs Furnival's heartless treatment however much it also recognizes her own errors and unappealing ordinariness. In chapter 40, for instance, Trollope provides an account of an argument that ends with Mrs Furnival's direct accusation of an affair. "I have this to say," she says to her husband:

'you are disgracing both yourself and me, and I will not remain in this house to be a witness to it.'

⁴⁷ *Orley Farm*, i.92.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, i.197. The physical comparison with Catherine Dickens later in her life is striking.

⁴⁹ *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, iv.87.

‘Then you may go out of the house.’ These words, be it remembered, were uttered not by the man himself, but by the spirit of port wine within the man.⁵⁰

Trollope does not narrate this kind of cruelty—however much spoken by a character under the influence of fortified wine—elsewhere in his fiction.⁵¹ Mrs Furnival’s forlornness, captured particularly in her husbandless meals alone at home, including at Christmas, and her dispiriting friendship with the unlikeable Miss Biggs, makes clear the division of sympathies. ‘She could forgive everything, anything,’ Trollope’s narrator remarks in a particularly poignant moment, ‘if he would only return and be contented to sit opposite her once again.’⁵² Mrs Furnival—whose name, suggestively, is Kitty, the diminutive of Catherine—is over-reacting to Mr Furnival. He is not, after all, *actually* having an affair. But his refusal to tell her the truth—or to go home—generates peculiar anguish in the narrative.

Could it be that Trollope, at moments like this in this sub-plot, is obliquely thinking about Dickens’ rumoured abandonment of Catherine Hogarth for a younger woman? Lady Mason is not an actress and neither is the age gap the same as that between the eighteen-year old Nelly and the forty-five-year old Dickens. But unmissable explicitness could hardly have been sensible here. And elsewhere there are other instances in Trollope’s prose when Dickens feels closer, almost uncomfortably so, in this otherwise Dickens-aware novel. An example is Trollope’s contemplation of what a man’s professional success can do to a marriage. ‘Men who had risen in the world as Mr Furnival had done do find it sometimes difficult to dispose of their wives’, Trollope’s narrator says, thinking about the difference between the man a woman marries and the one he becomes:

⁵⁰ *Orley Farm*, i.320.

⁵¹ Although one might remember the two stories listed in note 37.

⁵² *Orley Farm*, i.86.

It is not that the ladies are in themselves more unfit for rising than their lords, or that if occasion demanded they would not as readily adapt themselves to new spheres. But they do not rise, and occasion does not demand it. A man elevates his wife to his own rank, and when Mr Brown, on becoming solicitor-general, becomes Sir Jacob, Mrs Brown also becomes my lady. But the whole set among whom Brown must be more or less thrown do not want her ladyship. On Brown's promotion she did not become part of the bargain. Brown must henceforth have two existences—a public and a private existence; and it will be well for Lady Brown, and well also for Sir Jacob, if the latter be not allowed to dwindle down to a minimum.⁵³

The newly successful Anthony Trollope is reflecting, it might be, on his own relationship with Rose Heseltine (1821-1917), his wife, about whom he would famously say nothing in *An Autobiography* (perhaps in part because of the financial scandal in her own family). Yet could the figure of Catherine Hogarth, no longer fit to be the companion of Great Britain's most celebrated novelist, also be hiding behind these words just as she might be faintly adumbrated in the sufferings of the solid and red Kitty Furnival, left at home—and then in a rented room—by a husband seemingly in love with a younger woman? When Trollope hesitated in *An Autobiography* over the moral teaching of Dickens' fiction—the passage about Dickens' work with which I began—he was primarily remembering *Oliver Twist* (1837-9) and Nancy.⁵⁴ But it might be the case that Trollope was also, somewhere in his mind, bothered not by the fiction but *by the man* and what kind of example of sexual loyalty Dickens—the great novelist of the family, of fidelity and commitment—was setting in the late 1850s and early 1860s.

⁵³ Ibid., i.82.

⁵⁴ Trollope told Thackeray in a letter of 15 November 1860 that 'I could think of no pure English novelist, pure up to the Cornhill standard, except Dickens; but then I remembered *Oliver Twist* and blushed for what my mother & sisters read in that very fie-fie story', *Letters*, i.128.

There is one complicating factor. If the rumours of Dickens' marital problems are present in the Dickensian textures of *Orley Farm*, Trollope appears to have been implicitly siding—like Thackeray—with Catherine, and thus with the integrity of marriage as a life-long arrangement. The novel gives no impure encouragement for us to admire Furnival's behaviour to his rejected (if misunderstanding) partner and the plot ensures that reconciliation is effected at the end, even if the reunion of the Furnivals is hardly ecstatic. But amid this Dickensian novel's engagement with Trollope's own autobiography, with which I began, is it possible that *Orley Farm* not only doubts Dickens and frowns on the rumours about him but also—*doubts Trollope*? What about Kate Field?

We know that Trollope met the much younger American journalist and author Kate Field (1838-96) for the first time in Florence at the house of his brother in October 1860, the year before *Orley Farm* began. And we know that her lively, peculiarly 'external' character attracted him immediately. We also know that, quickly, a relationship of some intensity developed.⁵⁵ Intriguingly, in *An Autobiography*, Kate—who has far more time devoted to her in that book than Rose—is introduced with a negative: 'There is an American woman,' Trollope said in words he knew would only be read in public only after he had died,

of whom not to speak in a work purporting to be a memoir of my own life would be to omit all allusion to one of the chief pleasures which has graced my later years. In the last fifteen years she has been, out of my family, my most chosen friend. She is a ray of light to me, from which I can always strike a spark by thinking of her. I do not know that I should

⁵⁵ Lilian Whiting's *Kate Field: A Record* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, 1899) reproduces one of Kate Field's rare comments on Trollope, in a letter to her aunt from the autumn of 1860: 'Anthony Trollope is a very delightful companion, I see a great deal of him. He was promised to send me a copy of the *Arabian Nights* (which I have never read) in which he intends to write "Kate Field, from the Author"'. A flirty promise indeed.

please her or do any good by naming her. But not to allude to her in these pages would amount almost to a falsehood.⁵⁶

Trollope manages to handle this in a way that invites the reader to think his topic risky. Why should Kate not be mentioned? Why should she not be named? Here is, perhaps, an uneasy subject for the novelist concerning a woman to whom he ended a letter on 8 July 1868, some years after *Orley Farm*, with the words: ‘Give my kindest love to your mother. The same to yourself dear Kate—if I do not see you again,—with a kiss that shall be semi-paternal—one third brotherly, and as regards the small remainder, as loving as you please’.⁵⁷ Here was a lady who mattered to Trollope—as Trollope mattered to Kate. Strikingly, too, she never spoke about him after he had died. As her most recent biographer, Gary Scharnhorst, observes: ‘Field concealed the [exact] nature of her relationship with Trollope even after his death in 1882. He was somehow off-limits, a special case, compared to Landor, the Brownings, George Eliot, and others. Despite repeated opportunities to reminisce about Trollope, she never did so’.⁵⁸ For Trollope, bothered by a sense of appropriateness, the rightful behaviour of a gentleman, the story of Kate’s place in his life was best left more or less undiscussed too.

Trollope had no affair with Kate. And, as it happens, Kate—so far as anyone can tell—had no intimate relationships with anyone. But, as Trollope was thinking about *Orley Farm*, his own success, and the rumours circulating about Dickens’ marriage, he might also have been weaving into the subplots of sexual betrayal coded warnings to himself, enchanted, as he had become, by a younger lady not his wife. If Trollope is a great novelist *of* rumours—they sustain the plot of *The Way We Live Now*, apart from anything else—he cannot at all have been fond of the idea of ungentlemanly rumours about himself. If he disapproved, like Thackeray, of Dickens’ treatment

⁵⁶ Trollope, *An Autobiography*, 195. In the first published version, Trollope’s son Henry Merivale Trollope, deleted the word ‘American’, present in the MS. It is restored in Nicholas Shrimpton’s edition.

⁵⁷ *Letters*, i.438.

⁵⁸ Gary Scharnhorst, *Kate Field: The Many Lives of a Nineteenth-Century American Journalist* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 38.

of Catherine and his enthusiasm for a younger woman, Trollope could have wanted no awkward gossiping about himself—at fashionable Epsom, in a London gentleman’s club, in *The Times*, in the New York press, or anywhere at all. *Orley Farm* contains, perhaps, his own covert warning.

In 1876, the widow of Dickens’ friend ‘Barry Cornwall’ (Bryan Procter, 1787-1874) recalled a recent dinner party at which Tom Trollope and his wife, Frances, had been present. The party had been given by Anthony Trollope, presumably in 39 Montagu Square. The topic for discussion had been, of all things, the sexual fidelity of the now-dead Charles Dickens. ‘Antony [*sic*] & Tom’, Mrs Procter reported, ‘say it was only *friendship* between Dickens & Miss Ternan—!’.⁵⁹ Mrs Procter’s views are clear, as Michael Slater rightly notes,⁶⁰ in the italic and exclamation mark. But in the light of *Orley Farm*, fourteen years earlier, it is possible to wonder about what complicated issues might have lain behind Anthony’s public determination, in that party, with his brother and his wife—Nelly’s sister, after all—present, to keep Charles Dickens’ name in the clear despite Mrs Procter’s incredulity. Trollope had been in the Ternan circle for years; he had been a friend of Thackeray and had been shocked by the Garrick Club Affair; he was a reader of the press; and he was acutely interested in the status and narrative habits of Charles Dickens—‘Mr Popular Sentiment’ as he called him in chapter 15 of *The Warden*⁶¹—as an artist in prose. The Montagu Square dinner party gives us one point of view on Trollope’s understanding of Dickens’s marriage and his affair with the much younger Nelly. But I think that the richly Dickensian *Orley Farm* had put things, for those with eyes to see, rather differently.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Michael Slater, *The Great Charles Dickens Scandal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 42.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ For a discussion of this, see Jerome Meckier, ‘The Cant of Reform: Trollope rewrites Dickens in *The Warden*’, *Studies in the Novel*, 15 (1983), 202-23.